

# *WHAT HAPPENS IN THE AUTUMN*



 BOOKS FOR YOUNG EXPLORERS  
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

# **WHAT HAPPENS IN THE AUTUMN**

by Suzanne Venino



A smiling scarecrow guards pumpkins and corn on a farm.



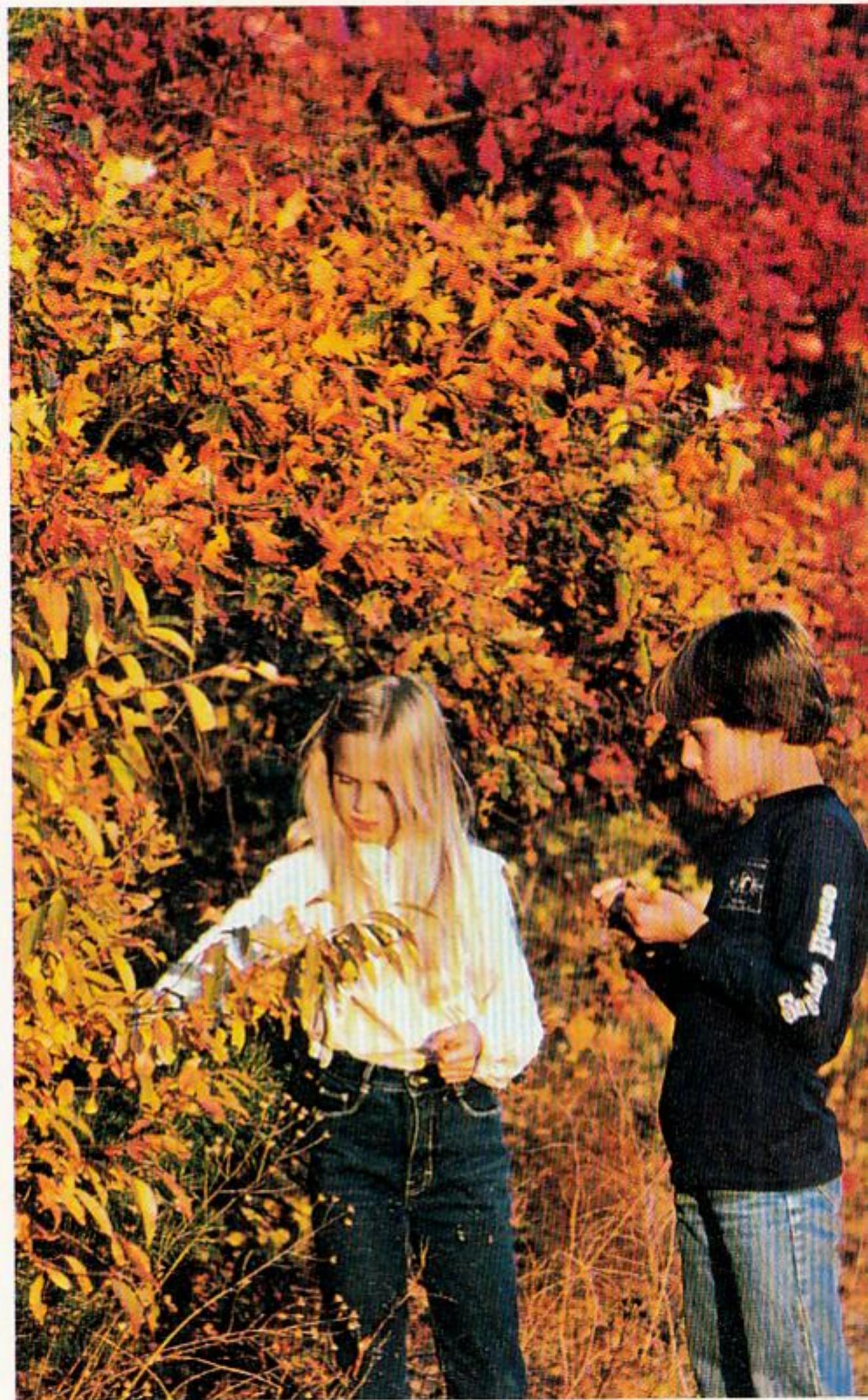
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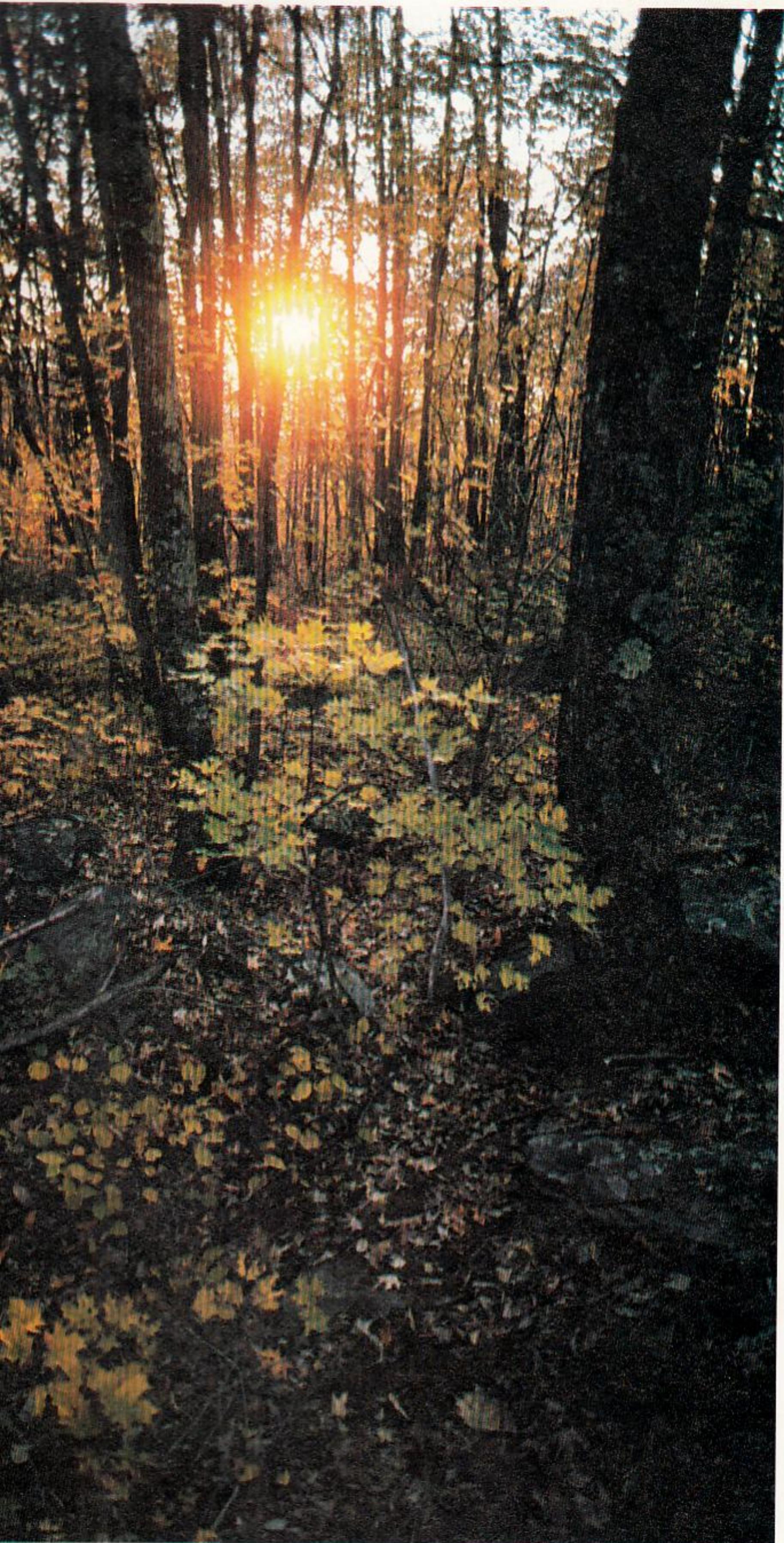
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**A**utumn has come to this forest. Autumn is the season of the year when the leaves of many trees change color—from green to orange, red, or yellow. Two friends named Portia and Shane look closely at the bright orange leaves of a wild cherry tree.





The setting sun shines through trees in the woods. The days grow shorter in the autumn. Each day, darkness comes a little bit earlier than the day before. But there is still enough light for Shane to play outside after school.

The autumn months are September, October, and November.

When September comes and summer ends, many exciting changes take place outdoors.

You can see the changes all around you. You can feel them in the air.

There are cool days when the air is clear and crisp.



**Do the leaves change color in the autumn where you live? They do in many places. As the leaves slowly die, the green in them disappears.**



The leaves on these maple trees have turned bright colors.  
Soon the leaves will come loose and drop off.





**T**wo horses graze in a quiet pasture.  
There are fallen leaves on the grass.  
A gust of wind sends more leaves  
fluttering to the ground. Some leaves  
drop in a stream and then drift away.  
Soon many trees will be bare.



Fall is another name for autumn.  
Do you know why? It's because this  
is the season when leaves fall from trees.





**L**eaves, leaves, everywhere! Portia and Shane play in leaves they raked into a pile in Shane's backyard.

Raking leaves is an autumn chore. People often put leaves in bags to be taken away. Sometimes people put dead, rotting leaves around garden plants to help them grow.

**I**n a meadow, the children discover what happens to many plants in the autumn. They dry out, and their seeds are scattered.





The dry pods of milkweeds have burst open. The seeds inside will float away on bits of fluff like tiny parachutes. Shane blows away the seeds of a fluffy dandelion. Portia helps scatter milkweed seeds. The seeds travel far and wide. They will have room to grow into new plants in the spring.



**A** chipmunk has found an acorn, the fruit of an oak tree. A squirrel searches for food on the ground. In autumn, chipmunks and squirrels scurry about, gathering seeds and nuts. Chipmunks store food in their underground homes. Squirrels often bury their food. These animals may then have enough to eat in winter, when food is hard to find.





**F**all is a busy season on a farm. It is time to harvest the crops that have grown all summer, and time to get ready for winter. Portia cleans an ear of corn she picked from a stalk. A farmer drives a big machine called a combine. It cuts down the cornstalks, and it removes the corn from the cobs.



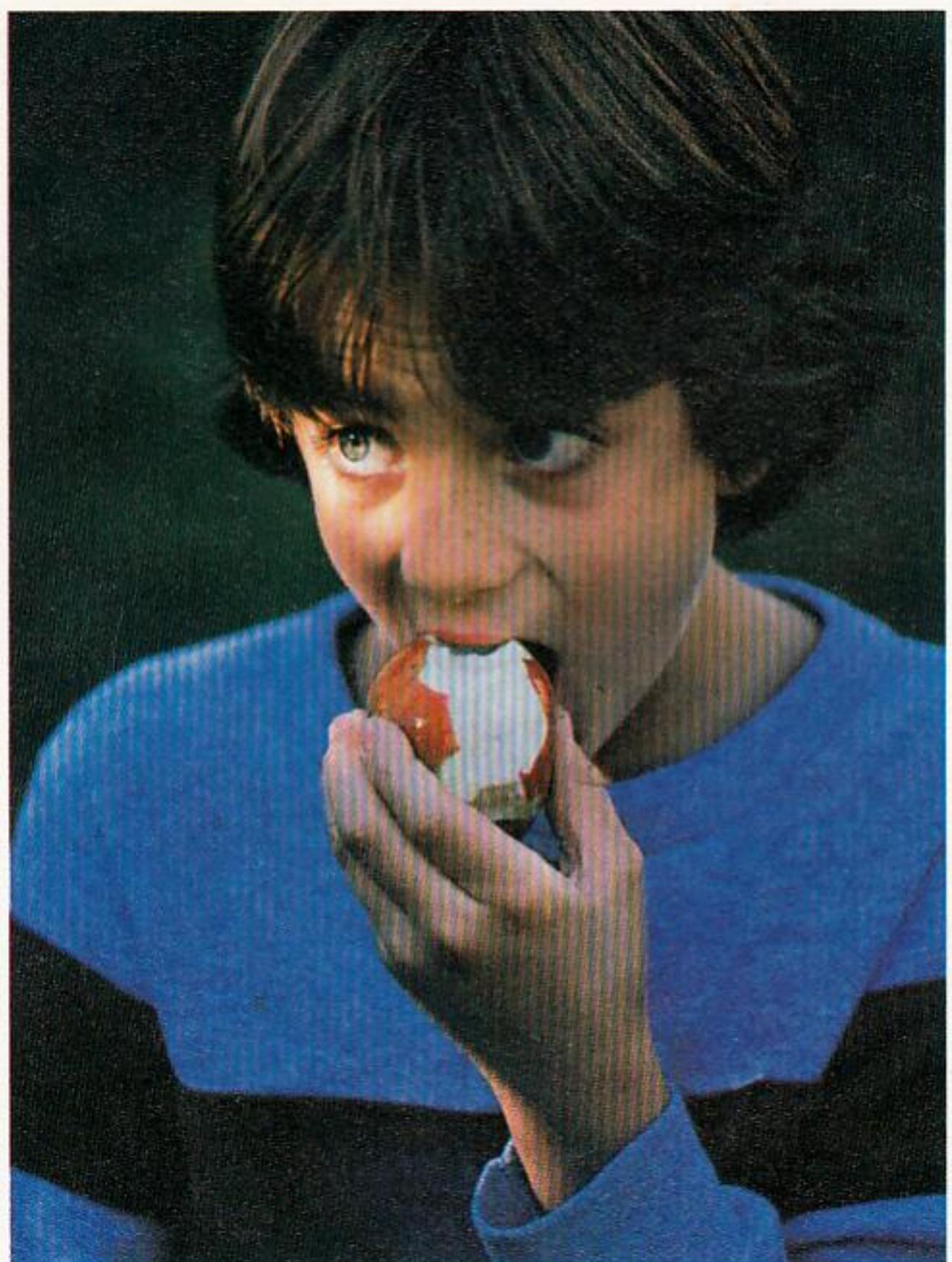
Kernels of corn pour from the combine into a big wagon. During the winter, the farmer will use the corn to feed pigs, cows, chickens, and other farm animals. Three pheasants search for bits of corn left in the field.



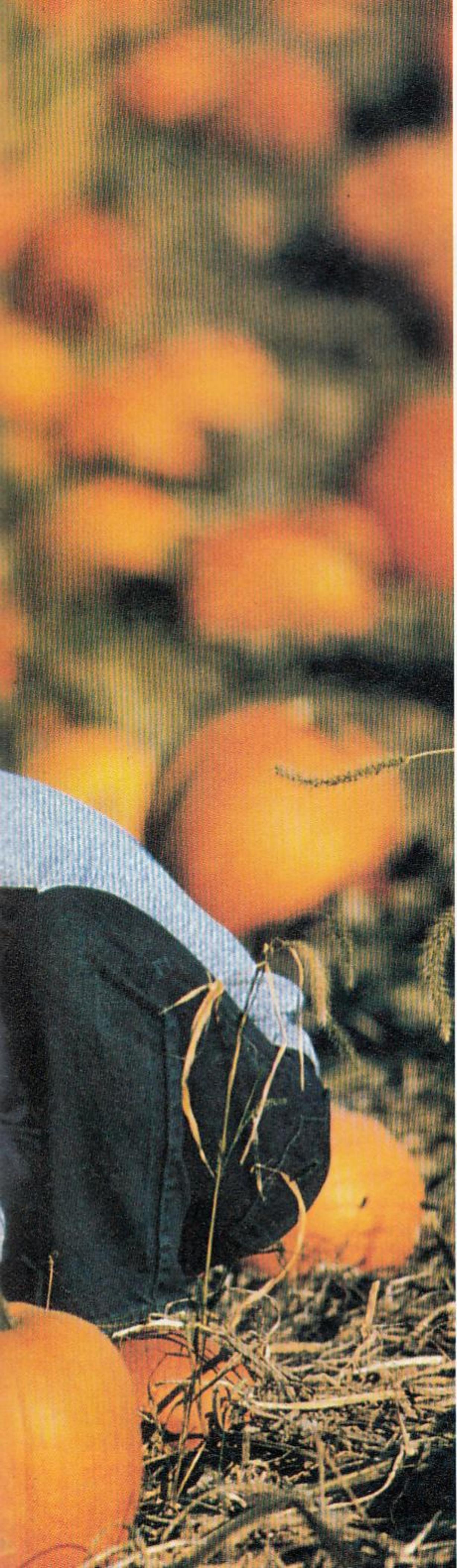


**I**n autumn, apples are ripe and ready for picking. Shane and Portia pick apples in an orchard. Shane bites into one right away.

Apples can be baked in pies, pressed into cider, or made into applesauce. Fruit that falls to the ground becomes food for birds, insects, and other animals.





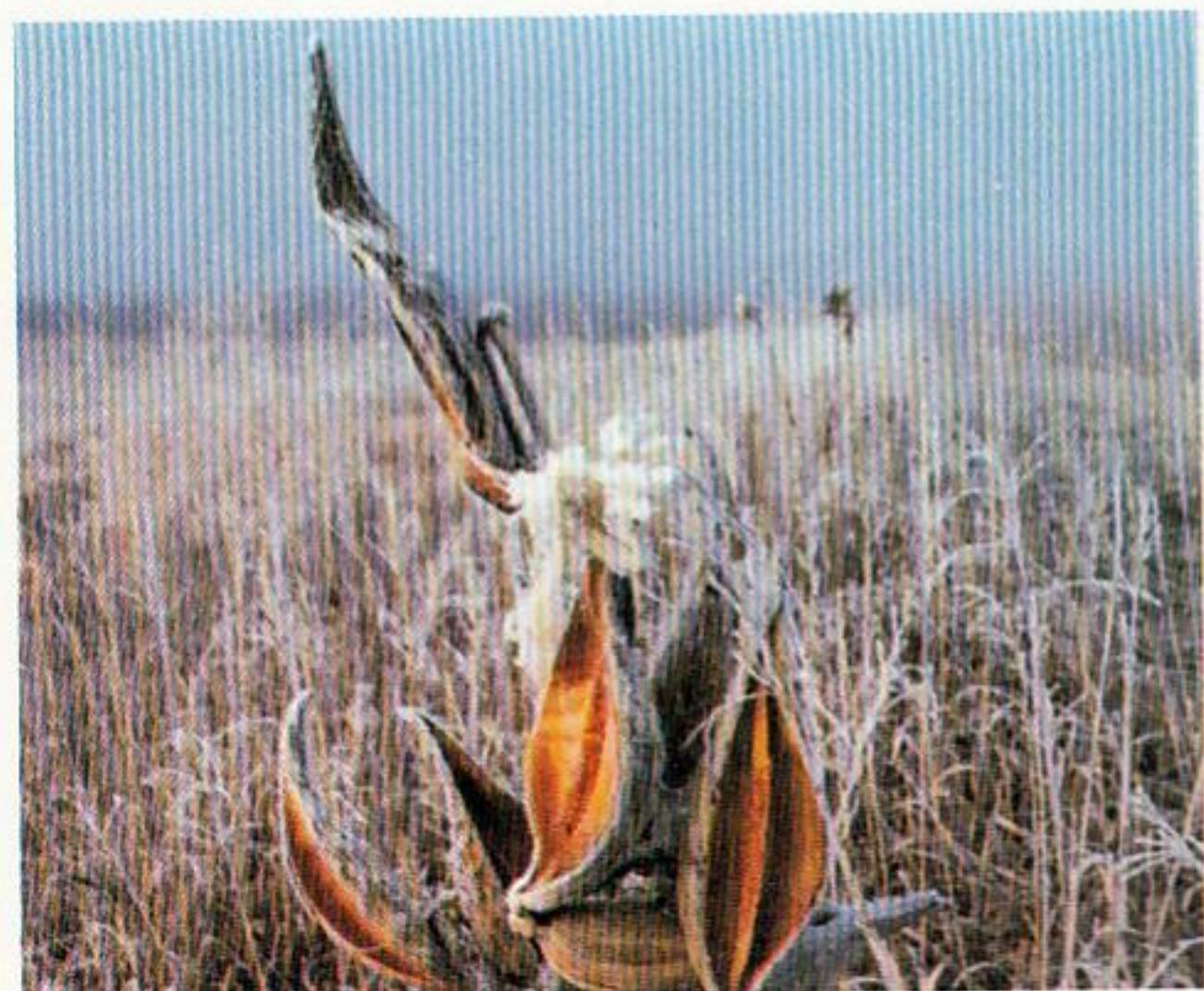


In a pumpkin field, Portia and Shane look for just the right pumpkin to make into a jack-o'-lantern. With some help from their parents, they will hollow out the pumpkin and carve a scary face on it. A candle inside will shine a greeting to children who come trick-or-treating on Halloween night.





**L**ook up in the air! A big flock of snow geese is heading south. So are these three Canada geese. In autumn, many kinds of birds fly to warmer places where they can find food more easily. Soon the weather will grow cold, and frost will cover the fields.



**A** raccoon  
peeks from its  
den in the trunk  
of a dead tree.  
The raccoon  
will sleep here  
in cold weather.

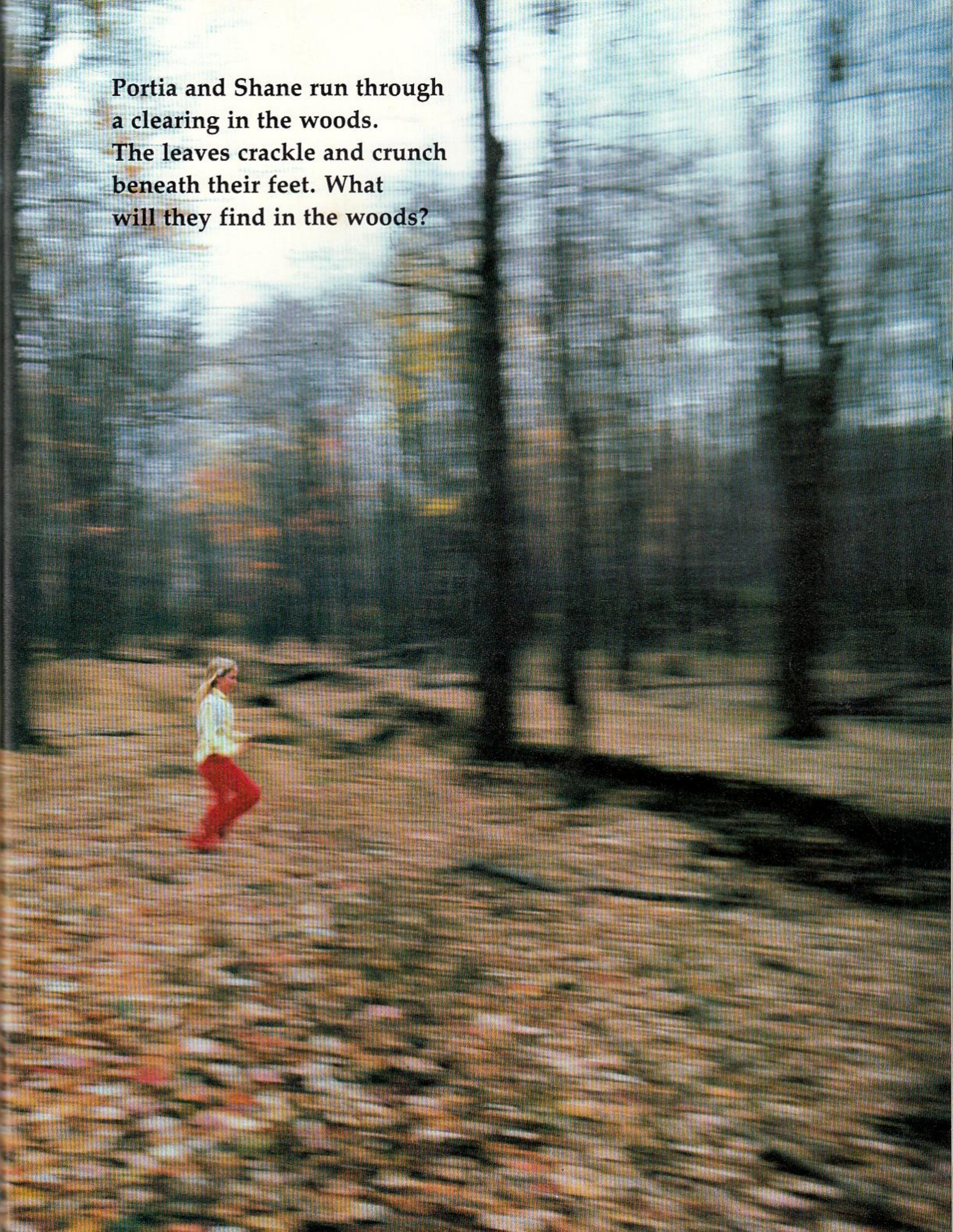


A young woodchuck  
spends most of the  
autumn eating. It eats  
as much food as it  
can find, and it grows  
very fat. Woodchucks  
sleep through most  
of the winter in their  
underground homes.  
In autumn, the fur  
of a red fox grows  
much thicker. The fur  
will keep the fox warm in  
the cold months ahead.





**Portia and Shane run through  
a clearing in the woods.  
The leaves crackle and crunch  
beneath their feet. What  
will they find in the woods?**





**P**ortia finds an insect called a walking stick crawling on a leaf. It looks like a twig with legs.



Before autumn comes, female walking sticks lay eggs that will hatch in the spring. Walking sticks die in cold weather, but some other insects do not. In their hive, buzzing bees store honey they will eat in winter. Caterpillars spin a covering that protects them. A ladybug finds shelter under a piece of bark.

**A** black bear wanders around in an autumn snowstorm. In the fall, the bear looks for a den where it can spend the coldest days of winter.

Now the days are chilly. The nights are long and cold. Soon the bear will go into its cozy den and sleep. Autumn is almost over, and winter is on the way.







*Published by*

The National Geographic Society  
Gilbert M. Grosvenor, President  
Melvin M. Payne, Chairman of the Board  
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Maple leaves sparkle with frost as  
the sun sets on an autumn afternoon.

Cover: Portia carries a heavy pumpkin  
that will become a Halloween jack-o'-lantern.

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INC. (30-31).

Library of Congress Data

Venino, Suzanne.  
What happens in the autumn.

(Books for young explorers)  
Summary: Text and photographs describe such autumn occurrences as leaves changing colors, animals getting ready  
for winter, and the harvesting of crops.

1. Autumn—Juvenile literature. [1. Autumn] I. Title. II. Series.  
QH81.V38 1982 574.5'43  
ISBN 0-87044-452-2

82-47858

